The City of
College Station, Texas
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Partnership Effort Results In Increased Safety For College Station Residents

Lightning, one of the top three natural disaster threats, typically kills or severely injures a large number of people annually in the United States. This factor, combined with the large number of people involved in outdoor activities locally, has lead the emergency management personnel of the City of College Station, CSISD, and TAMU to install Lightning Prediction Systems in many of the City's parks, school campuses and throughout much of the area on the Texas A&M campus. The purpose of these systems is to further contribute to the safety of users of the outdoor facilities by complementing existing rules and practices already in place.

Installations are now complete and the systems are operational. The Lightning Prediction Systems, alert to the *potential* for impending lightning, are designed to give an optimal 8 to 18 minutes of advance warning for the danger of a nearby lightning strike. The same manufacturer, Thor Guard, INC. makes all the sensors installed; the various locations, listed below, have independent warning alarms.

Alerting methods consist of the audible horns and flashing lights at the park, playground, athletic field, school ground, pool, or other location where outdoor activity was such to warrant installation of this prediction system. The audible alert sounds one long 15-second blast and the strobe light begins flashing to indicate that conditions conducive to lightning are present. At this time, procedures to clear fields and pools, stop or postpone athletics, and reduce exposure of personnel outside will be implemented as appropriate. Once the danger has past, the system will sound an "All Clear" by the actuation of three short blasts of the horn with the cessation of the flashing light.

The alerting horns have a range of about one-half mile in all directions and are installed at the following locations: Central Park; Bee Creek Park; Wolf Pen Creek Amphitheater; Sandstone Park; Pebble Creek Park and School; Thomas Park and College Hills Elementary; W.A. Tarrow Park, Wayne Smith Field and the Lincoln Recreation Center; A&M Consolidated High School and Athletic Complex: A&M Consolidated Middle School, Oakwood Intermediate School and Anderson Park; Southwood Park, Pool and College Station Middle School; and Jack and Dorothy Miller Park and Rock Prairie Elementary. TAMU unit locations may be viewed on the web at http://ehsd-online.tamu.edu/information/Interest/CampusLightningSystem.htm.

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These horn alerting systems are on a timer, with the hours of operation selected to best serve the primary purpose of the facility and the highest number of users. Most sensors are set to begin at 7 a.m. and end at 8 p.m. daily, however, the high use parks and athletic fields are set to end after most scheduled competition is complete, either 10:00 p.m., 11:00 p.m., or 12:00 a.m., depending on the site. No unit is set to activate after midnight or before 7 a.m. Routine testing of the systems is planned. TAMU currently tests their systems on the second Tuesday of every month.

For more information, please contact Ralph Staplin, College Station Emergency Management Coordinator, at 764-6210 or email rstaplin@ci.college-station.tx.us, or Mike Ball, CSISD Deputy Superintendent for Business Operations, at 764-5409 or email mball@csisd.org.

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